1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

beginning to use carts, but many villages still keep Rawats to tend and milk their cattle and manufacture ghee. They are inveterate eaters of beef, not only at funeral ceremonies or when raising a stone for the dead, but at *pandum* ceremonies, family or clan gatherings, the completion of a new tank and similar occasions. Most villages have a rocky place set apart for skinning and eating cattle. They are reluctant to kill and eat only their own cattle; on the borders of the Jagdalpur Muria country, especially at the time of the *pandum*, they often attempt to steal young heifers or calves from the nearest Muria or non-Muria village: I had once to impose a collective fine on the villagers of Nennor for hiring two men who had been convicted for two or three former thefts to go to the Muria village of Erokot and steal a bullock, which was the mainstay of the Nennor new-eating feast.

Dogs and cats

Hill and Bison-horn Marias keep tame dogs and cats, and the dogs of the latter are often well-trained hunting dogs who will go with their masters in a beat without giving tongue. Bison-horn Marias coax a dog to them by calling '*Durro*,[1] *durro!*' and a cat (*pusali*) by '*Mini*,[1] *mini!*' while '*Dorra, dorra!*' is used for driving a dog off.

Other pets

Bison-horn Marias occasionally keep parrots and bulbuls, and some of them use hawks for catching quail and other small birds.

D. Fishing

All Marias make their own rods of bamboo and lines of *kosa* silk; the hooks are generally in these days bought in the markets, but occasionally thorns are said to be used. They use rods only in the rains, and bait their hooks with worms or with *konda*, a paste of rice chaff.

The Kuruk or Jaralnr are the Maria fishing caste of the big river valleys, speaking the Gondi dialect of the neighbouring villages. The Kuruks of the Indrawati valley from Nelasnar to Bhairamgarh are scarcely distinguishable from the Hill Marias in appearance and customs, but the Hill Marias look down on them and do not allow inter-marriage; like those of potters and blacksmiths, their houses are carefully segregated from Maria houses. They maintain ferry services in their dug-out canoes on the Indrawati, and are paid an annual retainer in grain by the Hill Maria villages which frequent Gidam, Nelasnar, Bhairamgarh and Kutru

[1] I have since heard *Durro* and *Mini* used in the same way not only by Gonds but by Korkus also in the Hoshangabad district of the Central Provinces.

THE MURIA'S LIVELIHOOD

539
223

There are uncle-nephew sambhar grazing there.'
When the Raja saw them the deer ran to the hill.
He flew the hawk to catch them.
But the hawk did not catch the sambhar and flew away.
Mîlo mîlo called the Raja, but its pubic hairs took no heed.
The Raja went home weeping and told his elder brother's wife
That his hawk had flown away.

'Give me food quickly, I will go to find it.'
The girl gave food, the Raja ate it quickly.
He slung his basket on his back and went to find his hawk.
He went calling *Mîlo mîlo*, but he found no trace.
The Raja wandered on from land to land.
He came to the realm of Jihgunji Raja,
And called *Mîlo mîlo*, but still there was no sign.

The daughters of Ispural were living there.
In their house they hid the hawk; they said, 'We have no news of it'.
The Raja said, 'Where is my hawk? I will give you a reward'.
'We know nothing of your hawk and we want no reward.
Let us go to play, brother, in the sea of sixteen streams.
Then we will tell you of your hawk, and then you will find it.'

They went to bathe in the sea and having bathed, returned.
'Choose now which of us you will take away.'
'I will take the youngest, Phulsundri Rani.'
Quickly they finished the marriage, and gave him back his hawk.
He took his hawk and Rani and brought them home with him.
His elder brother's wife came to greet him with a pot of water.
She greeted him with Johar, and thus they lived and ate.

X. Fishing

226

The Muria are not professional fishermen, a duty which normally falls upon the Kuruk or Dhimar, but whenever they live near a river they naturally make every effort to supplement their diet, and everywhere they catch the small fish that live in tanks and flooded fields.

825
821
614

They do not know a great deal about fish, and apart from saying generally that lightning is caused by the flashing of the scales of a great fish that leaps into the air and the legends they tell about the bod fish, which is the totem of several clans, they have little folklore about them. They distinguish a dozen types of fish, among them the *bodmin*, *sipa*, *dandai* or *karangra*, *udri* (or *bhusi*), *bets* (or *khokta*), *dandum*, *lowe* (or *turu*) and *bigum*.

278

The gall-bladder of the *bigum* is regarded as an important remedy for snake-bite, a belief which is shared even by educated Hindus and members of the State Medical Service. The Muria extract the gall-bladder and preserve it by filling it with the small kosri grain. They keep this carefully and when it is needed, the grain, which has been thoroughly soaked in the bladder secretions, is removed and put in water. When it is dissolved it is given to the patient to drink.

227
226

The Muria fishing apparatus is of the usual type. They sometimes use a hook and line suspended from a bamboo rod; the hook is baited with flies and

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

226
227
[524]

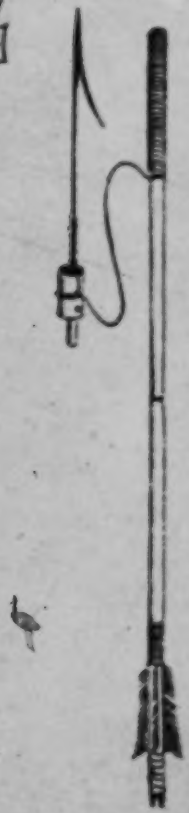
worms and a peacock feather is attached to the line as a float. There are riddles about both hook and float. The hook is 'the bullock with the broken horn that drinks the water of twelve villages'; the float is represented as saying to the fish, 'You are eating secretly, but I'll tell brother what you're up to'.

Nets are also used. The *chaugovi* is a net with a very fine mesh which takes at least a year to make. It is weighted with little balls of baked earth or iron and thrown into the water. Other nets are the *jhorli*, the *tângra* and the *serka*. These are pushed or dragged through the water, or stretched across the narrow part of a stream and the fish beaten into them.

The *mândar* is a net of hemp cord attached to a bamboo trap which is set in rapids and narrow streams. The *kurjûr* is a rigid net. Ten bamboos joined at one end radiate outwards and a net is spread over their points. The middle of the net is raised by a cord attached to the top of the trap, and it is then thrust down into the water. The *jaiwa* is the net attached to a triangular bamboo frame which is pushed through the water, the fish being caught in the belly of the net simply by the pressure of the stream. The *chargod* (Plate XIX) is attached to bamboos tied together at the end of a long pole and is dipped into the water.

The *dundka* or *soudri* is a bamboo basket with a wide bottom tapering sharply towards the top with holes in the upper side. It is used (Plate XVIII) in conjunction with the *dandar* (also called *talai* and *binar*), a long bamboo cylinder measuring about five and a half feet, about two feet wide at the large open end and gradually narrowing: inside is a spiral with bamboo points projecting inwards.[1] The small end is placed in the hole at the side of the *dundka*, and the water drives the fish down the trap and thus into the basket.

The *thâpa* (Halbi) or *utâd* (Gondi) is a circular plunge-trap, three feet wide at the bottom. A Chherta song refers to it:



[537]

FIG. 11. Arrow with detachable head, used for shooting fish
Length of shaft 21'

Thâpa re thâpa, mâchh mârriya thâpa,
Ye gâon cho loka manke, bâte nawan châpa.

O trap, trap, fish-killing trap,
Take the boys of this village and press them down.

The *chodiya* is a bamboo scoop two-and-a-half feet long leading into a pocket extending another one-and-a-half feet. It is placed in a field at some point where the water escapes, and catches crabs, frogs and little fish. 'In the middle of the field Gango's son is weeping *chir chir*.' This scoop may some-

[1] This trap resembles the Fenland eel-trap used in the Severn near Worcester. It is known as a grig in Fenland, and is made of split osiers. In Worcester the narrow end is called the starling. It has two zones of pointed sticks called inchins in Worcester and chains in Fenland. *Choir* is an old word for the narrow part of a river.—*See Man*, 1934, p. 178 and 1936, p. 179.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

times be of very great length. In Kuntpadar there were two measuring over 21 feet long.

The *dhir* is an elaborate and beautifully constructed trap, from four to eight feet long and one and a half feet high. The bamboo slats are very fine and set close together. Entrance to the trap is by a series of small doors with spiral staircases going inwards and upwards with bamboo points facing in to prevent egress. When the fish have entered—and the *dhir* is only used for the smallest creatures—they are shaken out of a small hole at the top left-hand corner. In a riddle this trap is described, '*Natânek horinta muruus tagai ke peshinta*: It goes in behind and comes out through the roof', or 'It eats with four mouths and relieves through the fifth'.

A special arrow with a detachable head is sometimes used (Fig. 12). The arrow-head after sticking in the fish is pulled out of its socket but remains attached to the shaft by a cord. The shaft remains as a float, and is easily recovered.

Ceremonial beats for fish are held before the eating of the new mangoes. The chelik gather poisonous leaves and roots from the forest and throw them into the water. The fish are stupefied and float to the surface and are then easily collected. They are distributed among the villagers, who eat them with the new mangoes.

Many different roots and leaves are used as fish-poison. At Phunder they gave us the names of the fruit of the mode tree, the khuni plant and kurra bark. These three are powdered, mixed together and thrown into the water. Women are not supposed to go into the water when this is done.

Before fishing the Muria invoke the Yer Kanyang (Water Maiden), asking for success and promising a token present. When the first fish is caught they say, 'Whatever ill may be, from widow, witch, from squint or evil eye, be on you'. They spit on it and throw it back into the water. If there is a very successful catch, they may sacrifice a goat or pig on the bank of the river in honour of the Water Maiden.

XI. Liquor

To the Muria liquor-drinking is both a duty and a pleasure. Mahua spirit is a duty because it must be offered to the gods at every festival, at the naming of a child, at a marriage, at a funeral. But the juice of the sago-palm, and even landa rice-beer (where that is taken), is only for pleasure. I will consider duty first.

The mahua tree is a source of food and oil as well as of liquor, and for this reason is greatly honoured. The tree, says Dalton, 'is held sacred by the Gonds, and truly no product of nature has greater claims on their gratitude'.[1] The Muria place a branch of the tree in the centre of the marriage booth; they lay the dead to rest beneath its shade; it is taboo to cut it in a clearing for shifting cultivation; as a source of alcoholic refreshment it was discovered by Lingo himself. Like the Gond and Baiga, the Muria are bound to offer it on every ceremonial occasion; the clan-god demands it, the Village Mother can never have enough, there is no better means of keeping the Departed content and quiet.[2]

In the ghotul, a donation of mahua spirit must be brought by a young boy aspiring to chelikhood; its consumption is a necessary feature of an election

[1] E. T. Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1872), p. 281.
[2] The *Koya* put a mahua leaf in the hand of a new-born child.—Thurston, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 52.

Plate XIX

226
● 227

Dasru at Markabera with his charged net

[p. 78 (4)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 A#32 Gond A#32
Muria

Plate XX

226
● 227

Chelik at Kokhera fishing with a net

Boys setting a sonori trap in the River Kori

[P. 78 (B)]